

WHAT IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS?

Families Anonymous (FA) is a Twelve Step, self-help, mutual-support fellowship made up of the concerned relatives and friends of people who abuse drugs or other mind-altering substances or who demonstrate related behavioral problems.

WHY IS FAMILIES ANONYMOUS NEEDED?

Substance abuse is a pervasive disease that destroys the lives of addicts. Sadly, it can also devastate the lives of their families and friends who can suffer mental, emotional, and often physical pain while hopelessly watching addiction consume their loved ones. These hurting people (known as codependents) often need special help to regain their lives, find some peace of mind, and learn ways to help their loved ones recover. FA provides that help.

HOW DOES FA WORK?

The focus of the FA program is on the family, not the user. No dues or fees are required for membership, and attendance at FA meetings is a decision made by each member. Anonymity is stressed for the protection of ourselves and our loved ones, so first names only are used.

By following the FA Twelve Step program of recovery, which includes basic readings, discussion of FA-approved literature, and the sharing of similar experiences, members find a way to put their lives back together and achieve a sense of serenity. Moreover, when concerned relatives and friends get help, their afflicted loved ones frequently benefit as well.

HOW CAN FAMILIES ANONYMOUS AND PROFESSIONALS COOPERATE?

People often turn to professionals for guidance about what to do or where to go for help. Professionals can assure them that free help is available in Families Anonymous support groups.

Professionals have sometimes started FA groups and then respectfully stepped back and left the members to run the meetings in accordance with our Twelve Traditions, which require autonomy, anonymity, and no other affiliation. Many professionals attend FA meetings as lay members, leaving their professions outside the meeting rooms. The anonymity of our members allows our FA groups to keep “principles above personalities.”

EDUCATORS

Children and teens who are in trouble because of their use of drugs or alcohol or who exhibit related behaviors often have attendance problems at school or have trouble “fitting in.” When this comes to the attention of school counselors and administrators, many school districts make families aware of programs for students and refer them to places that can help these young people.

FA focuses on support for the families and friends of these young people, so they can address their own roles in the lives of their sick loved ones. When families learn new coping skills and different attitudes, this can be beneficial for improving family relationships.

HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS, HOSPITALS, TREATMENT CENTERS

Truly successful and lasting treatment can occur only when the chemically dependent person is able to arrest this illness and when that person’s family and friends find help for themselves. It takes time for addicts and codependents to change long-standing behaviors. The best treatment program or facility is a great source of help, but it cannot provide family support on a continuing basis. FA fills this need and is a vital part of recovery for the family and friends.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS, ATTORNEYS, GOVERNMENT AGENCIES, PROBATION OFFICERS

Let’s face reality! One of the biggest problems that law enforcement faces with regard to drug and alcohol abuse is dealing with abusers’ families—especially parents. The grief and denial that parents experience when faced with behavioral problems associated with substance abuse are sometimes manifested in hostility toward and disrespect for the legal system. A law enforcement referral to FA can provide families with a means of relieving their anxieties and becoming more functional in dealing with legal problems.

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Many cities have leaders who plan public forums or town hall meetings to address substance abuse in their communities. These are excellent occasions for providing information about places where addicts and their families can find help. Family members often find it awkward and difficult to speak

out and ask questions about a problem that may be pervasive in their own families or neighborhoods, and they may choose instead to withdraw socially due to feelings of hopelessness and guilt. Here, in the venue of a community forum, they can hear what they need to do in order to deal with their problems. Panels or speakers knowledgeable about substance abuse can provide useful, practical information, much-needed comfort, and hope to audiences who are used to classic advice, fault-finding, and sympathy without remedy. Included in such forums may be an FA member, who can tell his or her own story about how FA helps and supports family members.

LIBRARIANS

Who knows how many of the people coming into libraries may be privately wrestling with guilt, anger, frustration, anguish, and other negative emotions that accompany codependency? When a library displays FA literature and meeting notices, it is fulfilling a need in the community by providing a resource for suffering families and friends.

CLERGY

When counseling parents, family members, or friends of those involved in substance abuse, members of the clergy may encounter questions of doubt, denial, low self-worth, and faltering religious beliefs. FA is a spiritual program, open to all, regardless of religious affiliation, or lack thereof. It offers members an effective self-help support system that encourages changing attitudes and actions. *It works!* Recovery resulting from participation in FA can help resolve negative self-perceptions and frequently strengthens religious convictions.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEE-ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Employees who are in pain because loved ones are involved with drugs or alcohol often show their suffering in the workplace. Behavioral changes due to fatigue, preoccupation, impatience, absenteeism, and attitude become problematic. Productivity suffers. FA provides the support that allows employees to manage their problems more effectively. A referral to FA may be the best solution an employer can offer to a troubled employee. It may help him or her achieve full potential and productivity using the positive attitudes brought about in this Twelve Step fellowship.

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For additional copies of this or other FA literature, to find a local meeting, or for information about starting a new group in your community, please contact:

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